



RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Shelter-In-Place Fact Sheet

Definition

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to shelter-in-place. This is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors. (This is not the same thing as going to a shelter in case of a storm.) If you are told to shelter-in-place, follow the instructions provided in this fact sheet.

Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building. Sheltering-in-place is a temporary protective action that can be implemented immediately. Because many radioactive materials rapidly decay and dissipate, staying in your home may provide equal or greater protection from radiation exposure than evacuation because the walls of your home block much of the harmful radiation.

Whether evacuation or sheltering-in-place is more protective depends on the type of release, the type of shelter available, the duration of the plume passage, and weather conditions. Sheltering in place may involve a variety of actions, including:

- Going indoors.
- Limiting outside sources of air.
- Making preparation to evacuate.
- Listening to EAS.

Planning

- The safest place in your home during a radiation emergency is a centrally located room or basement. This area should have as few windows as possible. The further your shelter is from windows, the safer you will be.
- An emergency could happen at any time, so it is best to stock supplies in advance and have everything that you need stored in the shelter. Stock as you would in case of severe weather conditions or other emergencies.
- Every six months, check the supplies in your shelter. Replace any expired medications, food, or batteries. Replace the water in your shelter to keep it fresh.
- Make sure that all family members know where the shelter is and what it is for. Caution them not to take any items from that area. If someone “borrows” items from your shelter, you may find that important items are missing when they are most needed.
- If you have pets, prepare a place for them to relieve themselves in the shelter. Pets should not go outside during a radiation emergency because they may track in radioactive materials from outside.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room you select. Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.

Procedures

- Stay calm - don't panic.
- Bring your family and pets inside and stay inside.
- Turn off fans, air conditioners, and forced-air heating units that bring air in from the outside. Close and lock all windows and doors, and close fireplace dampers.
- Ensure essential supplies are available (food, water, personal hygiene items, first aid kit, flashlight, portable radio, extra batteries, pet supplies, etc.).
- Avoid eating home grown vegetables, fruits or berries; instead eat canned or prepackaged foods
- During sheltering, prepare items for possible evacuation of you and your pet(s).
- During a General Emergency, administer potassium iodide (KI) when directed and if available.
- Make sure the radio is working. Keep your radio tuned to an emergency response network at all times for updates on the situation. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.
- Don't leave your shelter or evacuate unless told to do so.
- Call your emergency contact and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition.
- Use electrical sources for heating.
- Post a "NOTIFIED" sign for authorities.
- If you must go outdoors, return to the shelter as quickly as possible. Covering your nose and mouth with a wet cloth may provide some protection against inhaling radioactive materials.
- Upon returning indoors, remove clothing and place in a plastic bag and take a shower to remove any potential contamination.